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Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

Contribution by women**

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** The views and opinions expressed do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

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I. Introduction

1. The present paper represents the inputs received by the women major group organizing partners from two consultation processes organized during the Africa and the Asia regional implementation meetings held in Addis Ababa (22 October 2007) and in Jakarta (26 November 2007). The consultation processes provided common priority issues in these two regions to be addressed by the women major group in the present discussion paper relevant to policies, programmes and practices in the areas of agriculture, rural development, land, drought and desertification. Additionally, a two-week electronic consultation process was conducted through major women's networks and several listservers with groups engaged in Commission on Sustainable Development processes, including Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN), African Women Leaders in Agriculture and the Environment (AWLAE) and GRATIS Foundation (Ghana). A desk review and research of relevant published documents was also conducted.

2. The concerns and issues of the women major group in ensuring gender mainstreaming and addressing the specific needs of women, particularly rural women, cuts across all the themes and clusters. Hence, the paper focuses on the important role and contribution of women, progress made to protect women's rights and recognize their role and contribution, obstacles and constraints that women face in advancing implementation, lessons learned, priority issues and new opportunities. The paper, however, was not able to fully address the impact on women of current trends in the agricultural, rural development and land sectors, or of drought and desertification. The lack of gender-disaggregated data and published documentation of successful initiatives by women in agriculture and the rural development sector has been a major limitation in the preparation of this paper. Finally, input from the Latin American and Caribbean region was very limited.

3. The women major group organizing partners feel that this document does not represent the full scope of the concerns of women with regard to the themes of the Commission on Sustainable Development which are wide-ranging and complex. It should be noted that this document was prepared with very limited time and human resources by the organizing partners. National and subregional consultation processes and country-level case studies preparation are currently being promoted by the organizing partners in the African and Asian regions in order to provide much more in-depth review and analysis of the issues raised in the present paper, as well as of those issues that still need to be raised. It is hoped that the results of those processes and analysis of more case studies will be put forward by the women major group organizing partners, including by those who lead processes at the country level, during the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in May 2008. The organizing partners therefore encourage the reader to view this document as a first step and as background for the review, evaluation and analysis of the implementation of the relevant commitments of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21.

Background

4. More women than men currently work in the agricultural sector throughout East Asia, South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and northern Africa. In other regions, female employment in agriculture is higher in poorer countries. Women agricultural workers are responsible for half of the world's food production and are the main producers of staple crops, including rice, maize and wheat, representing 60 to 80 per cent of the food intake in most developing countries. Women are almost always responsible for children's nutritional needs and are key players in day-to-day agricultural tasks, the instigators of activities that generate agricultural and non-agricultural income and the custodians of natural and productive resources.[1]

5. Agriculture is the backbone of Africa's economy. It accounts for 60 per cent of the total labour force, 20 per cent of total merchandise exports and 17 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) and is the biggest source of foreign exchange. Despite its importance, the sector is in a crisis, as confirmed by the 200 million people (28 per cent of Africa's population) who are chronically hungry, the 20 per cent who are undernourished and the 50 per cent who are living below the international poverty threshold of $1 per day.[2]

6. Asia is home to 621 million poor people (two thirds of the world's total) who earn less than $1 a day.[3] Agriculture employs about 60 per cent of the labour force in South Asia and contributes 22 per cent of regional GDP.[4]

7. Although agriculture accounts for only 5.9 per cent of average gross domestic product throughout Latin America, it represents more than 10 per cent of overall gross domestic product (up to 32 per cent in the case of Guyana) in 11 of the 33 countries of the region.[5]

Why women?

8. Data from the International Food Policy Research Institute indicates that women are the key farmers of Africa. Women perform 90 per cent of the work of processing food crops and providing household water and fuelwood, 80 per cent of the work of food storage and transport from farm to village, 60 per cent of harvesting and marketing work and 90 per cent of all agricultural labour (such as hoeing and weeding).[6] In rural India, agriculture and allied industrial sectors employ as much as 89.5 per cent of the total female labour force, and in China, women account for 41.2 per cent of the labour force in agriculture and rural enterprises.

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[1] International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends for Women*, 2007.

[2] African Union/New Partnership for Africa's Development, *Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme*, 2003.

[3] Statement by He Changchui, Assistant Director-General for Asia and the Pacific of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) at a policy workshop on Asian economic renaissance: challenges and consequences on agriculture, food security and poverty, Chiang mai, Thailand, 2007.

[4] World Bank, *World Development Report 2008*, fact sheet for South Asia.

[5] Twenty-Ninth FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2006, *Trends and challenges in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and food security in Latin America and the Caribbean.*

[6] Quisumbing and others, 1995.

9. In view of the above, the agricultural sector should take account of the significant role and contribution of women when it assesses its contribution to global economies.

II. Review of commitments made by Governments

10. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, a legally binding treaty, was adopted in 1979 and had been ratified by 185 countries as at September 2007. Under article 14, paragraph 2, of the Convention, States parties have an obligation to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, to ensure to such women the right to have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes.[7]

11. Countries that have ratified the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also committed to submitting national reports at least once every four years on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations. An assessment made in 2004 indicated that 26 per cent of initial State party reports, had not been submitted. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the United Nations system face the challenge of encouraging, putting pressure on and facilitating the efforts of Governments to fulfil their reporting requirements. With the increase in the number of ratifications, the number of overdue periodic reports is also increasing, resulting in the reduced impact of international scrutiny of the compliance of States parties with the Convention. Analysis of the reports submitted poses a major challenge not only to the de jure enjoyment of equality, which today is guaranteed by many countries in their constitutions, but also de facto situations that reflect the extent to which women enjoy these rights in their daily lives. The reality is that, particularly for rural women, there is still a long way to go towards real implementation and domestication of the Convention.

12. The Beijing Declaration, adopted, with the Platform for Action, by 189 countries in 1995, called for women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, as being fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.

13. Other treaties have also forcefully addressed discriminatory practices and disparities between statutory law and customary law. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, established under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, for instance, has criticized discriminatory laws that prevent women from inheriting land, including in Cameroon (1999), Morocco (2000) and Sri Lanka (1998).[8]

[7] See http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm.

[8] See E/C.12/1/Add.40, E/C.12/1/Add.55 and E/C.12/1/Add.24.

A. Commitments made by Governments at the regional level

Africa

14. Africa and, by extension, individual African States, have committed themselves to strategically and comprehensively addressing gender-based challenges.

15. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights emphasizes the right to gender equality. It calls on the international community to support Africa's efforts in ensuring equal access at all levels of education and to promote and support efforts and initiatives to secure equitable access to land tenure and clarify resource rights responsibilities. Promoting the role of women in activities is one of the two long-term objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

16. The African Union Commission has developed a gender policy which calls for parity.

17. Regional economic communities have adopted gender policies, declarations and guidelines for the promotion and protection of the human rights of women.

18. Countries members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are in the process of adopting a gender and development protocol, which is a unique instrument destined to consolidate all SADC commitments on gender made at the regional, continental and international levels, such as the Beijing Platform of Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Millennium Development Goals, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and its Protocol on the rights of women in Africa, et cetera, into a subregional instrument that will compel SADC member States to accelerate efforts towards achieving gender equality and equity in the region. In particular:

(a) Fifty-one of the 53 African States members of the African Union have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

(b) Thirty-one of 53 countries have signed, and four have ratified, the Protocol to the African Charter on the rights of women in Africa;

(c) Attempts are under way to use poverty surveys conducted during the poverty reduction strategy processes to provide a basis for stronger gender analysis in macroeconomic and socio-economic profiles. Between 1995 and 2005, 48 countries prepared poverty reduction strategies and action plans that included gender concerns;

(d) The consideration of gender budgets in some countries has triggered more transparent processes for gender responsiveness in public expenditures.

Asia

19. Member countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand have taken legal steps and policy measures to mainstream women's participation in development.[9]

20. In India, the seventy-third and seventy-fourth constitutional amendments, adopted in 1992, provide for one third representation of women in the three tiers of local government and for one third of the chairpersons of local government institutions to be women. One million women were elected to be members of those institutions in each of the two elections held since the early 1990s; an estimated 6 million women have been positively affected by this legislation.

Latin America and the Caribbean

21. All Latin American countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

22. In 2004, women held 19 per cent of parliamentary seats in Latin America and the Caribbean, as compared with 9 per cent of seats in South Asia, 13 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and 18 per cent of seats in East Asia and the Pacific.[10]

B. Selected case studies

Women's right to land in Nicaragua[11] and Ethiopia[12]

23. In Nicaragua, strong political support during the late 1980s and early 1990s for women's right to land led to a significant increase in the number of women with a legal title to land. Achieved through joint-titling programmes, this policy reflects the power of political will in promoting gender equality in land rights. From 10 per cent of all women-held land titles issued in the 1980s, the figure jumped to 42 per cent between 1997 and 2000.

24. This initiative came about as a result of several crucial steps. First, the Government formally recognized women's rights by ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 1981. The establishment of a Women's Office in 1983 was followed by a change in the constitution in 1987, explicitly guaranteeing equal rights to women. In 1995, provisions within agrarian legislation encouraged the joint titling of land for couples. It is now compulsory for married couples.

25. Vital to all of the changes was the Cooperatives Act, adopted in 1981, which granted women the right to be members of cooperatives (many women quickly joined). Through cooperatives, women were able to gain access to land for cultivation and obtain financial services and Government-provided training services, take part in real decision-making and express their needs for the betterment of all Nicaraguan women.

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[9] Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Synthesis of the thematic reports on agriculture and land, rural development, desertification and drought — an assessment of Asian and Pacific Progress*, 12 November 2007, ESD/RIM/2007/1.

[10] World Bank, GenderStats database (http://genderstats.worldbank.org/home.asp).

[11] Ceci, S, "Women's Access to Land in Nicaragua", *Gender and land compendium of country studies*, FAO, Rome, 2005.

[12] World Bank, *World Development Report 2008, Agriculture for development: the gender dimensions.*

26. In Ethiopia, from 2003 to 2005, certificates were issued to about 6 million households (18 million plots), documenting inheritable land-use rights of the husband and the wife jointly, while still restricting market transfers. More than 80 per cent of evaluation survey respondents indicated that certification improved women's situations.

A targeted approach for women in Nepal[13]

27. An interregional Women in Nepal (WIN) project on the theme "Empowerment of women in irrigation and water resources management for household food security and health", was implemented as a pilot activity in Cambodia, Nepal and Zambia. The project was designed to test an innovative methodology for providing irrigation services to households previously deprived of such services through gender empowerment.

28. Although the project implementation process in Nepal was negatively affected by the country's disturbing political conflict situation and the massacre of the royal family in 2001, which delayed implementation for at least three months, it was subsequently operated quite successfully through its district partners, especially local women farmers' groups and local women social mobilizers.

29. The project has been providing services to 2,015 resource-poor households, targeting women members and enabling them to organize to improve their socio-economic status. At the start of the project, most of the targeted households were able to feed themselves for only 3 to 9 months of the year, but now they are able to handle their food insecurity problem by accessing food for 10 to 12 months of the year by means of year-round irrigation, crop diversification, and animal husbandry, consuming agro-products as well as selling them to buy additional food grain.

30. The main problem on which the project focused was challenges in the area of the sustainability of irrigation systems resulting from lower levels of participation and benefit-sharing by poor households, and by women in particular. Traditional irrigation systems, owing to their strong emphasis on growth and production with a view to enhancing national economic development, have somehow failed to address the interests of marginalized poor farmers, especially the illiterate, the landless, smallholders, economically exploited groups and caste groups that suffer as a result of social discrimination. There is almost no participation by vulnerable sectors in such irrigation systems owing to this technically oriented but socially deficient approach.

31. The following significant lessons were learned throughout the years of implementation:

(a) *Socially inclusive targeting*: experience has shown that resource-poor women, especially those from socially excluded caste groups, can be reached through a process of participatory social analysis involving all sectors of the community, once the implementers properly understand the project's social objectives and intended impact. Poor households were chosen through participative interaction and by building up a consensus with better-off households;

[13] The pilot phase of the project was executed by the water service of the land and water division of FAO.

(b) *Multidimensional partnership approach*: establishing partnerships among various development implementers has been very productive. Besides the sharing of responsibilities among agencies, the sharing of organizational values also took place between governmental and non-governmental organizations;

(c) *Local women as social mobilizers*: the role of local women in organizing women's groups and their development capacity has been crucial in mobilizing women's participation and benefit-sharing in the WIN project;

(d) *Coordinated leadership*: the role of the Ministry of Agriculture proved to be effective in developing expertise, especially in terms of internalizing the need for combining irrigation and agriculture for the benefit of women farmers, as well as in promoting awareness of health and nutritional issues;

(e) *Capacity-building of diverse stakeholders*: through the capacity-building of local and district WIN team members in gender-integrated participatory planning and multi-purpose development approaches, the WIN model has remained effective in transforming attitudes and behaviour towards women's participation and benefit-sharing in development activities;

(f) *Women-friendly and pro-poor irrigation technology*: the WIN project implemented women-friendly micro-irrigation systems for household food security, including drip irrigation, treadle pumps, sprinklers, et cetera, with technical support and input from International Development Enterprises;

(g) *Gender integration*: through gender-integrated participatory intervention, the project achieved significant changes in the area of women's empowerment related to their increased mobility and decision-making capacity, their managerial role in small irrigation projects and local development planning activities, their claiming of other productive resources, and so on — a process that should continue to be strengthened in the interests of sustainability by building up implementation capacity.

An integrated approach: gender sensitization workshops and training on access to technology for shea butter extraction for Gbimsi women in Ghana[14]

32. The Villinkrikri group of Gbimsi is a group of loosely associated women engaged in the extraction of shea butter as an income-generating activity to sustain their livelihoods. The group is made up of 41 women between the ages of 20 and 79 years. Most of the women are married, about half of them being second or third wives. About half of the women live in households of 4 to 6 people, while the other half live in households of 7 to 15. The average annual income per household is about 10 million cedis, equivalent to about $1,000. Apart from the secretary, none of the women was formally educated or had any idea about banking.

33. The women used to extract shea butter using the traditional method, which is characterized by a number of production and environmental drawbacks. These included the arduousness of the seven different operations involved in the process, the long processing time, low production capacity, excessive use of water and firewood and long periods of exposure to heat and smoke. Not only is the process labour-intensive, but it is also time-consuming. For instance, the women had to walk

[14] GRATIS Foundation, Ghana.

about 2 km to mill the kernels or use the traditional grinding stone to grind the kernels before extracting the oil by traditional means.

34. Owing to lack of working capital, the women were manipulated by exporters to produce butter for them at very low cost and under deplorable conditions. A series of gender sensitization workshops were held, followed by training in processing and machine operation and maintenance. The traditional leaders provided land, which paved the way for the construction of a permanent structure to house mechanical processing equipment, comprising a mill, a dehuller, a crusher and a diesel engine, which were then installed.

35. Gender sensitization workshops were held for the district assembly and the husbands of the members of the women's group. The women were then encouraged to travel outside their locality to see what women elsewhere had done. The piloting of the commercial production of shea butter using the installed equipment commenced. The women were then trained in bookkeeping and basic accounting, after which a bank account was opened for group members through a linkage with the local bank and the district assembly.

36. The following significant lessons were learned during the implementation of the project:

(a) Dealing with a completely illiterate group was a major obstacle at the initial stages, but the organization of frequent gender-training sessions helped to boost the confidence of the women, which contributed greatly to their learning faster than expected;

(b) The women contribute to the total volume of shea butter produced in the district. However, lack of guaranteed markets and low output prices — and, therefore, minimum net margins — is a challenge. The high level of illiteracy constrains their full participation in community-development processes that are political and require adequate knowledge of numeracy and understanding of the spoken and written English language;

(c) Collaboration between stakeholders enabled the project to be completed successfully.

"Passing on the gift" and gender mainstreaming in Zambia[15]

37. In Zambia, the work of Heifer International in five provinces has benefited approximately 7,000 people, who have become self-sufficient through the gifts of food, income-producing animals and training in environmentally sustainable farming. The Heifer International project in Zambia, whose strategic focus is to increase the participation of women in development at all levels, also recognizes men's participation in terms of planning, implementing and benefiting from the project. Its gender mainstreaming approach is based on a gender integration framework that includes political will, technical capacity, accountability and organizational culture.

38. The project strategies include training staff and partners on gender issues by hiring a consultant; giving priority to groups with at least 50 per cent female

[15] See Meryl James-Sebro, *Revealing the Power of Gender Mainstreaming*, InterAction Commission on the Advancement of Women, 2005.

membership in the project approval process; developing tools for gender analysis; strengthening partnerships with gender-oriented organizations; using gender case studies to develop curricula; and giving equal opportunities to women, men and children at all levels of project implementation.

39. The following lessons have been learned:

(a) Programmes and projects have been directly influenced by new institutional attitudes towards women, who are now trained to deal with, and are given, large animals. The gender mainstreaming strategy of giving women large draft animals has challenged stereotypes that restrict women to owning small ruminants;

(b) Men's initial attitude of cynicism with regard to the leadership of women at both the institutional and project levels has begun to be replaced by one of support;

(c) Fully understanding the impact of cultural traditions on women's societal position — particularly with reference to inheritance rights — the organization revised its "passing on the gift" policies so that the family (men and women) benefit, instead of giving exclusive ownership to the male, as had been done prior to gender mainstreaming;

(d) Culture dictates that animals and other property of the male go to his relatives in the event of his death, not to his wife and children. However, Heifer International has introduced a clause in the contract signed with farmers that allows a woman to inherit the animals if her spouse dies. This represents a significant change and demonstrates the transformative impact of gender mainstreaming strategies;

(e) Dual or collective ownership of resources and property, as introduced by Heifer International in its revised contracts, has encouraged women to play a more active and front-line role in public negotiations and discussions in communities.

The agribusiness women of Saurashtra, India

40. A visitor to Jambur, a small village located in Talala taluka in Junagadh district, Gujarat, would come across people belonging to the Siddi community. African in appearance, they speak Gujarat. Siddis are tribal people primarily of African origin (Ethiopia) who were brought to India about 400 years ago to work as slaves for the king of Junagadh.

41. The Siddis work as day labourers in both agricultural and non-agricultural occupations. The women are predominantly engaged in the collection and selling of fuelwood from Gir forest, and this is one of their main sources of livelihood. The majority of Siddis are poor and do not have enough resources to sustain their livelihoods. They do own some land (average of 0.5 hectares) but most do not cultivate it because they lack sufficient resources. Well-off farmers and moneylenders, take care of their land for a nominal fee. There have been Government and missionary efforts to rehabilitate them, but with little success, since those approaches have been based mostly on welfare, not on self-reliance. Also, most efforts have focused on the men, whereas the Siddi women are the main breadwinners.

42. The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (India), a non-governmental organization, undertook a range of interventions in the village, and the Jambur women's group made an exposure visit to Surendernagar. Encouraged by that visit, the women insisted on undertaking compost-production activities. The group sells the product directly in the villages nearby, although some farmers from outside Saurashtra have also bought from them.

43. It has been argued that organic farming is emerging as one of the solutions to sustainable agriculture and environment. It improves soil porosity, the compost binds the nutrients in the soil, making them available to plants for a longer period of time, and it improves plants and root growth because the essential nutrients, including trace elements such as iron, manganese, copper, zinc and boron, are available when required by the plants. It improves water-holding capacity, increases resistance to wind and water erosion and suppresses plant diseases.

44. It has been calculated that as a result of using compost, the farmers now save about Rs. 1,630 for every acre of land. The farmers used to use two truckloads of cow dung and one bag of diammonium phosphate (DAP) worth Rs. 4,000 and 430, respectively. With compost, they use one truckload of cow dung, 25 kgs of DAP and three bags of organic manure, costing Rs. 2,800. Over the years, the Jambur women's group has proved to be one of the most successful groups promoting organic farming. The group has also produced a detailed brochure about the use and impact of the product and has been engaging in promotion and marketing, actively participating in Krishi melas (women's fairs). Not only are the women earning income, but they have learned how to handle business. Now they are looking forward to undertaking vermicomposting, too.

III. Obstacles and constraints

Gender inequality as a major cause of slowing progress

45. Gender inequalities hurt the economy. Emerging macroeconomic analyses on Africa by the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank and the World Bank consistently show that gender inequality acts as a constraint to growth and poverty reduction. For instance, *Can Africa claim the 21st century?* (2000), a study by the three institutions, reveals that Africa has unexploited hidden growth reserves residing in potential partnerships between Governments and households, particularly the women in households. The study concludes that gender inequality is both an economic and a social issue, that greater gender equality could be a potent force for accelerated poverty reduction in Africa,[16] and that reducing gender inequality in access to and control of key resources necessary for growth is a concrete means of accelerating and diversifying growth, making it more sustainable and ensuring that the poor both contribute to and benefit from it. This is consistent with other macroanalysis work demonstrating the extent to which gender inequality directly and indirectly limits economic growth.[17]

[16] Economic Commission for Africa, *The Missing Link in Growth and Sustainable Development: Closing the Gender Gap*, 2004.

[17] Blackden and Canagarajah, World Bank, 2003.

46. The table identifies the benefits of addressing gender as documented in a number of situations.

Gender and growth: forgone production, income and well-being

Burkina Faso: shifting existing resources between men's and women's plots within the same household could increase output by 10 to 20 per cent.

Kenya: giving women farmers the same level of agricultural input and education as men could increase yields obtained by women by more than 20 per cent.

United Republic of Tanzania: reducing time burdens on women could increase household cash incomes for smallholder coffee and banana growers by 10 per cent, labour productivity by 15 per cent and capital productivity by 44 per cent.

Zambia: if women enjoyed the same overall level of capital investment in agricultural input, including land, as their male counterparts, output in Zambia could increase by up to 15 per cent.

Sources: World Bank (2007); Blackden and Bhanu (1999).

47. From the macro level all the way down to the household level, the failure to recognize or value women's contributions severely limits women's ability to maintain a position of power and equality. Domestic and reproductive tasks, such as collecting fuelwood and water and caring for children and the elderly, are often perceived to be a woman's duty and generally not considered economic activities, and therefore not counted as "work", although they greatly increase the burden on women.[18]

48. Even when major operations related to agriculture, such as dairying, are handled by women, the income is received by men, since they handle the marketing of the produce — marketing not normally being done by women. Decisions about the use of family income are normally taken by men. Consequently, investment in agricultural operations does not receive the desired priority and agricultural production suffers as a result.

Women's fundamental human rights ignored

49. Biases in formal and customary laws, social norms and values commonly result in fewer and weaker legal rights for women. Gender-biased discrimination equates to less pay for equal work, less social protection, less representation through unions and collective bargaining and reduced opportunities for education. Women continue to be denied rights to own or control the land that they cultivate. They remain unwaged and invisible workers on family farms or underpaid workers on others' farms.

[18] FAO, *Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development and Women*, Policy Brief, 2007.

50. The Economic and Social Council Commission on the Status of Women has stated that land rights discrimination is a violation of human rights.[19]

Women's lack of access to, ownership of and control over land

51. Land is the basis of social, political and economic life in many developing countries. Experiences from development projects show that women's independent land rights and control can enhance food security and economic opportunities, improve child nutrition, health and education and even reduce domestic violence.

52. Globally, women own less than 5 per cent of the world's land.[20] Even among the large and growing body of de facto female-headed households (such as in India, where the number is estimated at 35 per cent), only a few have direct access to land in their own right.

53. In Kenya, the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) reported in 1996 that only about 1 per cent of women own land. In Uganda, although women provide 70 per cent of the agricultural labour,[21] they hold only 7 per cent of the registered land titles.[22] In Cameroon, land registers show that less than 10 per cent of women hold land titles. In the north-west province, that figure is only 3.2 per cent, representing barely 0.1 per cent of the registered land mass.

54. In many developing regions, women typically must obtain rights to land through men — generally their husbands and sons. Weaker land rights make widows and women-headed households, in particular, very vulnerable in society. In Cameroon, women's insecurity increases upon the death of their husbands or fathers. In some cases, even if a legal document had been issued by any of the above parties to their wives or daughters, witchcraft is invoked or a serious boundary dispute used to eliminate the woman's claim to the property.[23]

55. Likewise, allocation, occupation and use of communal lands are generally obtained through Government-selected bodies, which grant occupation according to customary law, with an adult married man being allocated land for use by himself and his family. Thus women have access to land and related natural resources only through their spouse or male relatives.

56. The diversity of women's rights to land within indigenous communities merits deeper study to understand whether customary practices are a threat to, or, at times, can also protect, women's collective rights. Customary law can also be seen as flexible and open to different interpretations. However, given the fact that public spaces are controlled by men, interpretations tend to favour men. For example, women in Arunachal Pradesh in north-eastern India have begun to use this flexibility in customary law to make their claims to land, putting forward an alternate interpretation in support of their rights. Indigenous women across the

[19] Crowley, E, *Women's right to land and natural resources: some implications for a human rights-based approach*, FAO; Rome, 1998.

[20] Rural Development Institute (see www.rdiland.org/EVENTS/2007womensday.html#women).

[21] Uganda Land Alliance. *Current status and challenges in the land reform process in Uganda: an NGO perspective*. (http://www.acts.or.ke/paplrr/docs/CTPAPLRR-UgandaLandAllianceRugadyaPaper.pdf).

[22] Government of Uganda action plan for women, 1999, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

[23] Respondent from Cameroon.

globe are further struggling to expand their representation within institutions, both traditional and State institutions, in order to build a facilitative environment.[24]

Lack of access to productive resources

57. The following constraints have been identified:

(a) In rural Asia, where women produce 60 per cent of the food, they own only 2 per cent of the land, receive only 1 per cent of all agricultural credit and can access only 5 per cent of all agricultural extension resources;[25]

(b) An analysis of credit schemes in five African countries found that women received less than 10 per cent of the credit awarded to male smallholders;

(c) Only 15 per cent of the world's agricultural extension agents are women. Agriculture extension services are dominated by men in the absence of a sufficient number of women extension workers. Because of social customs, women do not freely interact with men and cannot, therefore, benefit from extension services to the desired extent;

(d) The participation of women in rural development through either commercial agriculture or related enterprises is hugely constrained by limited access to markets and market chains, as well as lack of credit;

(e) As a result of male domination, the technologies developed in the agricultural sector are not gender neutral, but biased in favour of men. The women therefore find it difficult to use such technologies.

Lack of women's participation in decision-making

58. Almost two thirds of the world's illiterate people are women, with the proportion varying widely by region. Women's low education levels and disproportionate domestic responsibilities, combined with cultural and social norms, restrict their ability to speak out in front of men, limit their ownership and management of land and money and undermine their involvement in productive employment, rural organizations and public decision making.[18]

59. Training is usually arranged at locations far away from the homes of women, who cannot fully avail themselves of it because of social customs or because they cannot leave their children to travel to attend such training.

60. Women's participation in community organizations that manage the natural resources on which agriculture depends can improve the effectiveness of the organizations. Survey results from 33 rural programmes in 20 countries found higher levels of collaboration, solidarity and conflict resolution in community organizations where women played active roles.[12]

61. Studies have shown that reserving seats for women increases investment in the type of infrastructure that is relevant to women and that village councils are more effective when gender-sensitivity training is provided to both male and female councillors.[12]

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[24] International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, 2006, thematic session on land rights of indigenous women.

[25] Rural and Indigenous Women Task Force 2004, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (www.apwld.org).

The changing context of women's lives as a result of environmental threats, drought and desertification

62. Interactions between humans and the natural environment such as over-grazing have brought about remarkable changes over the years, leading to drought and desertification and increasing climate variability. Women are significantly affected when erosion and diminished soil fertility result in decreased crop and livestock productivity, thereby reducing the sources of income derived from such products.

63. As environmental conditions worsen, more men migrate for longer periods, sometimes even permanently. Women are particularly affected because of the increase in the workload as a result of increasing male migration. Such migration means that men are contributing less and less to family incomes and women therefore have a responsibility to expand their productive role to earn income and ensure living standards above mere survival for their households. Women are facing the consequences of drought in the dry regions such as those in the Sudan and the Ethiopian Somali regions (including the Jijiga zone), including problems fetching clean drinking water for health and sanitation. In those areas women usually travel two or three hours per day to collect 15 to 20 litres of water, which they carry on their heads or backs.[26]

64. As women in drought-affected areas increase their contributions in terms of farm labour and household maintenance, they are also becoming responsible for more decision-making, since long-term migration sometimes means that major decisions, such as the purchase or sale of livestock or changes in cropping patterns, cannot wait until the men's return. Women are becoming de facto heads of household, and this is increasing the vulnerability of families to extreme poverty, as women are assuming traditionally male responsibilities without the same level of access to financial, technological and social resources. Women's workloads and responsibilities have become greater, but women have not enjoyed a corresponding rise in influence and opportunity.[27]

65. It has been observed that many African and Asian women increasingly migrate not only to urban areas and cities but also abroad in order to sell their labour owing to poor wages in their home countries. It has been observed that a large number of African women in diaspora are to be found in countries in Arabia.

66. Existing information reveals that women perform their strategic roles in agriculture and rural development under great resource and decision-making constraints. Women are especially affected where migration, marital instability, male mortality, conflict and single parenthood have left them as heads of households.

IV. Priority issues

67. The following priority issues for discussion at the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development were identified by the participants in the consultation processes (side events) organized by the women major group

[26] Respondent from Ethiopia.

[27] International Fund for Agricultural Development, *Gender and Desertification: expanding roles for women to restore drylands*, 2006.

organizing partners during the Africa and the Asia regional implementation meetings:

(a) Agriculture:

(i) More food through land ownership;

(ii) High levels of poverty and an unbalanced workload — double burden of unrecognized and undervalued labour;

(iii) Limited research attention to gender and women's issues in agriculture;

(iv) Lack of secure access to land, water, energy, credit, property and other strategic resources, resulting in low economic productivity;

(v) Gender-biased technologies, the absence of women-friendly labour-saving devices and limited training that perpetuate time and resource constraints;

(vi) Inadequate support for women's entrepreneurship, small businesses, cooperatives and organizations;

(vii) Markets and infrastructure;

(viii) Lack of skills in the context of the transition from subsistence to commercial farming;

(ix) Sustainable agricultural practices, such as conservation agriculture, is helping women, the environment and productivity — there are several cases that show that labour has been reduced. However, women need access to equipment;

(x) Agricultural production policies should explicitly include gender equality and actively promote the inclusion of women;

(xi) Loss of agricultural workers and farmers due to HIV/AIDS;

(xii) Women are farmers, too;

(b) Land:

(i) Inadequate ownership of and access to land by women;

(ii) Land rights for women;

(iii) Ownership of and access to land by women to improve their livelihoods/ socio-economic status;

(iv) Access to land through facilitating and advocating for the review/reform of gender-sensitive customary laws and practices;

(v) Governance;

(vi) Skills for effective participation in governance;

(vii) Policies that grant equal access and control to women and land and other natural and productive resources;

(c) Desertification:

(i) Land and ecosystem management;

(ii) Access to water;

(iii) Flooding;

(iv) Reliance on natural resources as a source of livelihoods and sustainability;

(v) Awareness and involvement of women at all levels of natural resource management;

(vi) Participation in rehabilitation programmes and projects;

(vii) Migration;

(viii) Conflict and resource use;

(d) Drought:

(i) Vulnerability of women to drought;

(ii) Integrated management of natural resources;

(iii) Involvement in water and sanitation programmes and resource management;

(iv) Negative impact of unsustainable natural resource management on women in terms of energy, food and water;

(e) Rural development:

(i) Capacity to demand livelihood and improved assistance;

(ii) Access to services and amenities;

(iii) Economic empowerment (increased access to resources);

(iv) Rural-urban migration;

(v) Unemployment;

(vi) Lack of energy;

(vii) Low resources allocation to rural development;

(f) Africa:

(i) Peace and stability;

(ii) Women play a key role in food security;

(g) Cross-cutting issues:

(i) Women and climate change;

(ii) Women and globalization;

(iii) Urbanization — majority in slums (no social amenities);

(iv) Illiteracy among women;

(v) Culture and leadership — traditional roles;

(vi) Population pressure not being dealt with;

(vii) Minimal formal representation of women in local and national governmental bodies and institutions;

(viii) Low levels of education, including basic skills, health and reproductive health education, and upsurge of sexual and domestic violence;

(ix) Gender concerns continue to be treated rhetorically or as separate women's projects;

(x) Weak mechanisms lacking adequate capacity, authority and funding for integrating gender equality and empowerment;

(xi) Poor utilization of gender-sensitive indicators (often not collected appropriately, lost in aggregation of published data or ignored);

(xii) Lack of effective monitoring and evaluation of existing systems designed to promote gender equality;

(xiii) Very low numbers of women professionals in agriculture and natural resource management organizations, especially in extension services;

(xiv) Agricultural and natural resource management institutions remain male-dominated and without the conditions that would enable gender-sensitive programming and accountability to women farmers.

V. New strategies and opportunities

Women and decision-making

68. More women should be involved in decision-making and policy processes related to agriculture, rural development, land and drought and desertification issues. There must be active implementation of the affirmative action of appointing women (40 per cent of all appointments) to key positions in public service and in national executive or policy-making institutions so that they can influence policy. In cases where there is a shortage of women with the requisite skills, the Government, in collaboration with relevant organizations such as civil society groups, can identify women who can be trained to become more effective leaders. Women in decision-making positions should be the drivers and movers of the new agriculture and rural development agenda.

69. By the same token, women should be recognized as key stakeholders and agents for change in sustainable development. There is a need to institutionalize the equal participation of women in policy formulation and development programming.

Allocation of resources to support gender equality

70. Development aid for agriculture currently comprises only one tenth of all bilateral official development assistance of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development member nations, and aid to support gender equality is only about 8 per cent of all aid to agriculture.[28] Women should be part of the design and decisions of development resource flows to support gender equality. Allocation of resources, development assistance and financing mechanisms that are

[28] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development-Development Cooperation Directorate Secretariat, 2005, *Aid to support gender equality, 1999-2003*.

being designed, including voluntary carbon trading schemes and migrant's remittances for rural development, should ensure support for projects that promote gender equity and rural development.

Addressing the capacity of local rural institutions to address the needs of rural women and girls, particularly women farmers, through training

71. The capacity to address the needs of rural women and girls, in particular women farmers, by rural institutions, such as through agriculture extension, cooperatives, rural financing institutions, decentralized government and local authorities, local community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations and others, should be ensured. Some capacity-building initiatives could include:

(a) Reorienting agricultural extension services to make them gender-neutral. More women extension workers need to be recruited;

(b) Using the training of trainers as a way to involve higher-level professional staff in learning and teaching participatory and gender-analysis approaches;

(c) Providing training for women's groups in negotiating and group-development skills and support for their organizations;

(d) Promoting links with policymakers, planners and managers by inviting them to participate in discussions of the implications of project results for planning;

(e) Training on how to link rural women with the high-value agriculture sector, i.e., emerging global supply chains (vegetables, fruit and flowers) and expanding supermarket chains.

Research and in-depth analysis of gender-differentiated effects of food insecurity

72. The enhancement of women's participation in addressing food security issues should start from an in-depth analysis of the various ways in which food insecurity and poverty have an impact on women and men at the country level. In that way, empirical evidence about the actual extent of food insecurity issues could be evaluated, and the participation of men and women in the achievement of food security could be better enhanced.

Gender audits of agricultural policies and programmes

73. Gender audits of agricultural policies and programmes could provide up-to-date information on the status of gender in the agriculture and land sectors. Such audits would also identify the gaps between men and women in those sectors and suggest possible solutions to policymakers on how to bridge them.

Collection of gender-disaggregated data on farming technologies

74. There is a need to collect gender-disaggregated data in order to ascertain which types of farming technologies and machinery were used by men and which by women in agricultural production.

Promotion of sustainable agricultural and rural development practices

75. The most viable farming systems, such as small-scale and family farms, are those in which women play an important role. They are the most productive in terms of feeding people and, at the same time, ensuring environmental benefits. Several proposals and approaches should be put forward, including organic farming, integrating permaculture concepts (the use of ecology as the basis for designing integrated systems of food production, housing, appropriate technology and community development), conservation agriculture (natural system processes diminishing soil disturbance and land degradation through reduced tillage) and others.

VI. Role of the women major group

76. The women major group could play a role in:

(a) Mobilizing professional women in the field of agriculture and cooperating with regional bodies to help them mainstream gender;

(b) Stimulating institutional linkages and expanding women-focused non-governmental organizations;

(c) Advocating to increase women's access to the labour market in the agricultural sector, reduce job insecurity and improve access to profitable markets;

(d) Identifying resource flows and funding mechanisms that benefit women;

(e) Assisting in the development of indicators and means to measure, monitor and evaluate the contribution of women to agriculture and rural development, the differential effects of policies and programmes on women's lives and the impact of gender mainstreaming on women and their communities;

(f) Encouraging role changes with a view to achieving a greater number of women and girls taking up technical trades while strengthening the capacity of professional women in agriculture and natural resource management;

(g) Building the capacities, knowledge and skills of women and girls through education, training, information, communication, networking and exchange of experiences;

(h) Building capacity in all relevant organizations to ensure gender sensitivity;

(i) Helping appropriate technology to reach women farmers, increasing women's involvement in technology development and encouraging skills development;

(j) Helping to identify new solutions and opportunities for rural women, including technical support and knowledge in agro-forestry, tree-replanting (specifically, multi-purpose tree species) and biofuel plantation development and extraction as a means of solving the problem of desertification;

(k) Capturing women's intrinsically sustainable indigenous knowledge, combining new and old actions that have great potential to have a positive impact on climate change;

(l) Sensitizing natural resource management projects and developing women-friendly technologies to reduce the impact on such resources, and enhance women's involvement;

(m) Supporting forums where rural women, in particular, can share their experiences with others;

(n) Supporting women working in conflict-prone areas and providing technical support in bridging rehabilitation activities of women to development activities through assessment missions that help identify priority needs for gender mainstreaming and policymaking.